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## Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TINA SMITH, a Senator from the State of Minnesota.

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, who holds the wind in Your fist and wraps the ocean in your cloak, we thank You for defending all who come to You.

Lord, on this December 7, a date that has lived in infamy, we ask You to bless our military. Give our military people Your presence and peace.

Bless also our lawmakers. Give them the wisdom to meet the challenges of our time. May they not grow weary in their efforts to find common ground. Lord, provide them with the strengthening joy of Your spirit, that they may have courage for hard times and determination for challenging tasks.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, December 7, 2022.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable TINA SMITH, a Senator from the State of Minnesota, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,  
President pro tempore.

Ms. SMITH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report:

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jeffery Paul Hopkins, of Ohio, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Ohio.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday evening, the Senate and House Armed Services Committee released its strong, bipartisan National Defense Authorization Act.

As Republicans have said for months, and I repeated yesterday, our servicemembers, commanders, and civilian leaders should not have had to wait until mid-December to gain certainty for a fiscal year that is already more

than 2 months over. We have to take our national defense military modernization, and defense industrial base as seriously as our rivals take theirs.

Fortunately, this strong, bipartisan NDAA is a huge step in that direction. The bill tees up a significant and badly needed increase in defense funding—\$45 billion above President Biden's insufficient request and roughly \$75 billion over last year's level. Once again, Congress agreed on a bipartisan basis that President Biden's defense budget request was anemic and insufficient.

This NDAA authorizes crucial projects like nuclear modernization. It directs critical investments in our defense industrial base so America can both defend ourselves and remain the arsenal of democracy for the world. It delivers for our servicemembers, their families, and our military installations and communities around the country.

Thanks to the leadership from our colleague Senator BLACKBURN, among others, this NDAA will repeal the President's military vaccine mandate—a policy which this Democratic administration had stubbornly clung to, even as it had clearly undermined readiness and hurt retention.

And just as Republicans insisted, just as our servicemembers deserve, this NDAA is not getting dragged down by unrelated liberal nonsense. Good, smart policies were kept in, and unrelated nonsense, like easier financing for illegal drugs, was kept out.

I am glad this Democratic-led Congress finally realized that defending America is a basic governing duty. It is not some Republican priority that Democrats can demand unrelated goodies to be wheedled into.

Neither party, let alone a sitting President's party, can ever have the mindset that they need to be goaded or bartered into supporting our troops. We made it clear we wouldn't be going down that road; our Democratic colleagues finally accepted it; and Senators REED and INHOFE did a great job landing the plane.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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